The Cheerful Letter

EVERY PLACE A CHURCH; EVERY DAY THE LORD'S DAY; ALL EVENTS BLESSINGS; ALL JOY THANKSGIVING; AND ALL NATURE AND LIFE FULL OF GOD.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

VOL. I. BOSTON, JULY, 1892. No. 2.

THE CHEERFUL LETTER.

MONTHLY: 50 cents a year. Single copy, 5 cents.

GEO. H. ELLIS, PRINTER, 141 FRANKLIN ST., BOSTON.

CONTENTS OF NO. 2.

QUIET FROM GOD. HYMN 9
QUIET FROM GOD. EXTRACTS FROM SERMON . . 9
THE STILL HOUR 10
THE BIBLE CLASS 14
THE HISTORY CLASS 15
THE STUDY OF HISTORY 15
THE BOOK AND MAGAZINE CLUB 18
THE CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE 18
THE MOTHERS' COUNCIL 20
MISCELLANEOUS 20

QUIET FROM GOD.

Quiet from God,—how beautiful to keep
This treasure the All-Merciful hath given!
To feel, when we awake and when we sleep,
Its incense round us, like a breath from heaven.

To sojourn in the world, and yet apart;
To dwell with God, and still with man to feel;
To bear about forever in the heart
The gladness which his spirit doth reveal.

What shall make trouble then? Not evil minds
Which like a shadow o'er creation lower.
The soul which peace hath thus attuned finds
How strong within doth reign the Calmer's power.

What shall make trouble? Not the holy thought
Of the departed: that will be a part
Of those undying things his love has wrought
Into a world of beauty in the heart.

What shall make trouble? Not slow-wasting pain,
Nor even the threatening, certain stroke of death:
These do but wear away, then break the chain
Which bound the spirit down to things beneath.

QUIET FROM GOD.

"When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?"—JOB XXXIV. 29.

There are those who make trouble for themselves, and are robbed of the quietness God gives by a haunting sense of insecurity of tenure. The elements of their peace are not permanent, and, while they last, are troubled by the fear of disastrous change. With such the goodness of God would seem to be precarious, always requiring to be made out anew in relation to present fortunes, to the clouds that are passing over their sky,—to be believed when they are happy, to be doubted when they are troubled. How few walk in the filial faith of Christ, that in God there is no darkness at all, no cloud upon his love, no speck of unfatherly purpose toward us, that could throw an undefined shadow on our spirits! How many of us live in apprehension of evils that never come!

I suppose there are few persons who do not feel now in regard to past years that through want of faith they threw their own shadows on God's sunshine, and how blessed all those years might have been if they had drunk the cup which each day presented, with a thoughtful consciousness of how full it was, if not of joy, at least of the waters of life, believing that of all the coming days that each would be sufficient for its own evil.

Nor is this spirit of apprehension, this timid or scrupulous abstinence from the present certainty of waking bliss, the best preparation for the inevitable shadows which God himself throws upon the happiest lot. One who is pallid in the sunshine is not likely to be radiant in the shade. One who in the full light of day will not fill his heart with peace and gratitude is not likely

in the night of trouble to stay his soul on faith. One who in green pastures and by still waters will not taste and see that the Lord is gracious will scarcely know it when in the shaded valley he hides his face.

We forfeit the quietness God gives (when not through sin) mainly, perhaps, in this way, that from not collecting our interests on the centre and end of life, upon that which alone is our life, all our dearest supports come to depend upon the instrumental and variable elements of existence. For what *is* our life? Surely, not the circumstances with which we have to deal, but the souls that deal with them. Surely, not the presence or the absence even of beings dearer to us than ourselves, but the unchangeable affections, the inward and abiding relations, of our spirits towards them, whether present or absent. Surely, not the sphere we act in, its problems or its projects, the apparatus of temptation and discipline, of joys or pains, that God provides for our education, but the measures of our faithfulness, our growth and work within the assigned conditions. Unless this was forgotten, we could not think so unreally of life, or transfer the interest as we do from the permanent spirit to the shifting scene. Call to mind the words of consolation which we offer or hear offered to those whom God has in any way afflicted. We marshal the alleviations; we number the blessings that are left; we make out a case that, after all, there are sufficient elements remaining out of which to construct our earthly tent-house of repose. We go round the circumference of life, forgetting the living soul at the centre, at which alone God directs the stroke of circumstance, and for whose health alone any circumstance or any possible combination of circumstances has the smallest permanent value. How few of us have the directness and simplicity to pass at once from these low shallows to the great deeps of spiritual life—to offer no consolations of that sort—to insult no tried heart with this wretched worldly arithmetic which shows not one particle of abiding wealth, to rise ourselves and raise with us the tried spirit to those true heights from which we see clearly that all the influences of God tend to no edifice of earthly comfort,—that here the quietness given of God is in a trusting spirit, in right affections, a heavenly hope, a holy will, however for the growth of these he may touch, change, and variously marshal all the moving world around us! It is because we attempt to make our permanent home in interests that are not at the centre, but only among the incidents of existence, that the tabernacle of our peace is so often broken up. Friends, blessings, joys, all that man's heart clings to,—these are aids to life, witnesses for God, immediate messengers from his goodness, nourishers of virtue, pledges of heaven. But, surely, God has left mortal man under no power of mistake. He has taught one lesson since the world began, with all the constancy of sacred warnings: he has sought to color our very souls with the sentiment that the aim and issue of all blessings, as of all privations, is clearness, soundness, trustingness at the central spirit,—Christ's heart, Christ's faith, Christ's will; that in these is the quietness of which, unless he "makes" trouble for himself, a man cannot be deprived.

Most of us are deprived of the consolations of Christ simply because we never reach Christ's view of life. Not living for spiritual ends, spiritual *gains* do not console us. Making our home in the heart of other interests, the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, and there abides no building of God, no house "not made with hands" eternal in the heavens. If our eye were single and *right set*, our whole body would be full of light; and every new disposition of our lives made by our Father's hand might test, enrich, and strengthen, but could not change, the right heart of obedience and faith.

God's deep well of quietness is the spiritual nature he gives and feeds. Our powers of thought, growth, love, communion with the Spirit of the universe, and the strong blessedness of our being, consist in the knowledge and perception that nothing essential can fail while we are permitted to draw from these fountains. Until a man feels that in his own soul there may be a peace unborn of circumstance and passing understanding,—an attitude of trustful waiting and obedience toward every possible aspect of God's providence, which can exempt him not from trial, but from wretchedness of spirit, and exalt his being in the effort to conform to the relations he discerns,—he has not yet built his house upon the

rock or reached the foundation that cannot be shaken. Christ said of the spiritual man that "out of himself should flow rivers of living water." Look for a moment upon our nature as in itself a fountain of life, as indeed made up of many fountains none of which can be closed unless our natural relations with God are neglected or distorted.

It is true that our present blessings are all touched with sadness, partly through moral imperfection, partly through the mortal side of human nature. It is clearly impossible, without some suffering, to adjust the relations of a nature that is finite in some of its aspects and infinite in others. We are constantly falling short, with a spirit that will not suffer imperfection to mistake its ease or its pleasure for the quiet of God. Immortality itself is a rupture with the present; and the present is dear. Our friends cannot pass into celestial brightness without leaving the earth in new darkness. To heaven, which has, is given; while from earth, which has not, is taken away. Progress, itself the highest mark of our immortal rank, is a struggle of the higher nature against the lower, a breaking away from our present place, a higher fellowship, a passing from the seen to the unseen. These are the perishable aspect of an imperishable nature. But where shall we find the quiet of God,—with the glory and the sacredness, or with the perishable conditions amid which they are reared?

And, under any circumstances, if the heart is only seeking unto God, desiring to do and bear his will, suffering is not misery. We must on no account confound the pains and woes of our mortal condition or of our mortal discipline with a soul that has no peace. Even when full of self-blame, of distrust and penitential shame, this is a state which is also full of hope. For nothing ought we to be more thankful to God than for this power to blame ourselves,—to separate what is good and holy and loving in us, and set it up as a judge over us. For this reproving self is our true self. The man who condemns himself is still safe: God has not cast him off. How strong are the reasons for immovable trust in the hearts of penitent men! They have not been abandoned. God has not taken his Holy Spirit from them. And, if our sins and sorrows have taught us wisdom, the offered Paradise is before us still: the threatening sword flames only over against the delusions we would now leave forever.

And, lastly, I must not shrink from naming the circumstances in which it is most difficult to abide in the quiet of God against the trouble of man,—amid the complications of sin, of sin not afar off, but brought very near to us,—sin that we cannot hide ourselves from,—sin entering within our innermost circle, and mingling with our daily life. We can only cite the case of the great Example, who fails us nowhere, to show that it is at least possible to be in daily contact with sin, and yet not lose peace with God. While bringing the love and power of God to bear upon it, he could not be without divine companionship. He had with him, in him, the spirit and the strength of the Comforter. He had twelve men to retain within his holy influence; and, such is man's free will, he did not succeed.

Among those twelve there were strife, jealousy, low ambition, avarice, falsehood, treachery, subornation of murder. Yet he could say, "Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you," and see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.

In all our relations with others we have to unite his solicitude for man with his trust in God, a zeal ever passing through a baptism of fire with the victory of faith. To unite these two states, the brotherly love that never rests, the restful faith that works miracles, is ever our difficulty, the problem of Christ's perfectness. As we attempt it, as we live in it, God giveth quietness; and who then shall make trouble?—*From sermon by John Hamilton Thom.*

Cast *all* thy care on God. See that all thy cares be such as thou canst cast on God, and then hold none back. Never brood over thyself; never stop short in thyself; but cast thy whole self, even this very care which distresseth thee, upon God. Be not anxious about little things, if thou wouldst learn to trust God with thine all. Act upon faith in little things; commit thy daily cares and anxieties to him, and he will strengthen thy faith for any greater trials. Rather give thy whole self into God's hands, and so trust him to take care of thee in all lesser things, as being his, for his own sake, whose thou art.—*E. B. Pusey.*

THE STILL HOUR.

PRAYER.

Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in thy presence can avail to make!
What heavy burdens from the spirit take,
What parched ground refresh as with a shower!
We kneel,—and all around us seems to lower;
We rise,—and all, the distant and the near,
Stands out in sunny outline, brave and clear.
We kneel, how weak! we rise, how full of power!
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong
Or others,—that we are not always strong?
That we are ever overborne with care?
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with thee!

R. C. TRENCH.

When we awake, we are still with thee, Lord God most merciful; and thy hand is over us for good, and thine eye fixed upon us evermore! No other friend, no other being, is nigh unto us as thou art. Infinite is thy power, and boundless thy will to do us good. No tongue can tell, no thought can fathom, the depths of thy love. A mother may forget her infant child, yet never, O Lord, wilt thou forget us. We lie down, and it is under the shadow of thy wings. We rise up, and thy hand leads us and thy right hand upholds us.

We need thy love shed abroad within us, to save our souls. Thou art giving us another day, and we know not what it may bring forth. We know not what perils await us, what temptations may assail us this day, what evil passions menace our peace; and we need light and strength from on high. Without the heavenly armor of religious faith we may make shipwreck of our dearest interests. Give us then, we pray thee, a sacred sense of duty, to shield us in the conflict, to guard us from sin and death.

Giver of every blessing! thou hast shown us what is good; and how divinely is it set before us in the life of thy beloved Son! May the same mind be in us that was in him, the same gentleness toward others, the same forgetfulness of self! . . . Let no root of bitterness spring up this day between us and any of our brethren. If occasions of unkindness arise, let not this day's sun go down upon our wrath. Give us grace to subdue every angry passion, to quench the unholy flame, to stop the hasty word.

Thou art the Father of our spirits, and the mysterious life that is in us is thine own inspiration. We have not been cast, worthless weeds, upon the dark shores of being; but, living, immortal existences, we were brought hither in thine invisible arms. We exist not for any temporary purpose, but for thine eternal will, even that we may be fellow-laborers with thee, and share in thy power and blessedness.

How hast thou encompassed us with the means and opportunities of a divine life! Light shines from heaven. In Jesus Christ we have a living revelation of thy will and our duty as thy children, and he has called us to be perfect as thou art perfect.

Every day and every hour thy spirit wrestles with our spirits. Every object that we look upon is a memorial of thy love and of our obligations. Every event of life speaks to us of thee.

And now another day has come, bringing messages from heaven. May it carry away new testimony to our fidelity! Through all that it brings of duty, of trial, and of enjoyment, let us never lose sight of the great end for which this life on earth is given. In the humblest employments to which it may call us, may we remember our exalted vocation as thy children and heirs of immortality! Whether we eat or drink, may we do all to thy glory, bearing it always in mind that the most familiar occasions are opportunities for faith, submission, and charity! Ever mindful of our own weakness, may we bear with the weaknesses of others. Considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted, may we be considerate and forbearing in our judgments!

Be this day to us the beginning of a new and divine life. May it bear away the record of our progress in knowledge and virtue, and so may every coming day be richer than the last! Thus daily strengthened with might in the inner man, we shall be armed for all trials; and thou wilt permit no temptation to assail us greater than we are able to resist. And when our last hour shall come, and we enter the dark valley, bidding farewell to this mortal scene, thou wilt be our rock and our refuge. Thy rod and thy staff will comfort us. We shall fall asleep in thine everlasting arms, and awake amidst the joys of thy presence.—*W. H. Furness.*

MINISTERING ANGELS.

Brother, the angels say,
Peace to thy heart;
We, too, O brother, have
Been as thou art;
Hope-lifted, doubt-depressed,
Seeing in part,
Tried, troubled, tempted,
Sustained, as thou art.

Brother, they softly say,
Be our thoughts one;
Bend thou with us and pray,
"Thy will be done."
Our God is thy God;
He wills the best;
Trust him as we trusted,
Rest as we rest.

Ye, too, they gently say,
Shall angels be;
Ye, too, O brothers,
From earth be free;
Yet in earth's loved ones
Ye shall have part,
Bearing God's strength and love
To the torn heart.

Thus, when the spirit, tried,
Tempted, and worn,
Finding no earthly aid,
Heavenward doth turn,
Come these sweet angel-tones,
Falling like balm,
And on the troubled heart
Steals a deep calm.

If you have any trial which seems intolerable, pray,—pray that it be relieved or changed. We may pray for anything not wrong in itself with perfect freedom, if we do not pray selfishly. One disabled from duty by sickness may pray for health, that he may do his work; or one hemmed in by internal impediments may pray for utterance, that he may serve better the truth and the right. Or, if we have a besetting sin, we may pray to be delivered from it, in order to serve God and man, and not be ourselves Satans to mislead and destroy. But the answer to the prayer may be, as it was to Paul, not the removal of the thorn, but a growing insight into its meaning and value. The voice of God in our soul may show us, as we look up to him, that his strength is enough to enable us to bear it.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

He that hath so many causes of joy, and so great, is very much in love with sorrow and peevishness who loses all these pleasures, and chooses to sit down upon his little handful of thorns. Enjoy the blessings of this day, if God sends them, and the evils of it bear patiently and sweetly; for this day only is ours, we are dead to yesterday, and we are not yet born to the morrow. But if we look abroad, and bring into one day's thoughts the evil of many, certain and uncertain, what will be and what will never be, our load will be as intolerable as it is unreasonable.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

If we are really and always and equally ready to do whatsoever the King appoints, all the trials and vexations arising from any change in his appointments, great or small, simply do not exist. If he appoints me to work there, shall I lament that I am not to work here? If he appoints me to wait indoors to-day, am I to be annoyed because I am not to work out-of-doors? If I meant to *write* his messages this morning, shall I grumble because he sends interrupting visitors, rich or poor, to whom I am to *speak* them, or "show kindness" for his sake, or at least obey his command, "Be courteous"? If all my members are really at his disposal, why should I be put out if to-day's appointment is some simple work for my hands or errands for my feet, instead of some seemingly more important doing of head or tongue?—*F. R. Havergal.*

Do not be discouraged at your faults: bear with yourself in correcting them as you would with your neighbor. Lay aside this ardor of mind which exhausts your body and leads you to commit errors. Accustom yourself gradually to carry prayer into all your daily occupations. Speak, move, work, in peace, as if you were in prayer, as, indeed, you ought to be. Do everything without excitement by the spirit of grace. As soon as you perceive your natural impetuosity gliding in, retire quietly within, where is the kingdom of God. Listen to the leadings of grace, then say and do nothing but what the Holy Spirit shall put in your heart. You will find that you will become more tranquil, that your words will be fewer and more effectual, and that with less effort you will accomplish more good.—*Fénelon.*

THE BIBLE CLASS.

Questions for July.

THE INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

1. Where is the word *Inspiration* used in the Old or New Testament; and what does it mean in those places?

2. When we call the New Testament *inspired*, do we mean that men were inspired to write it or that it was written by inspired men?

3. Is it anywhere said in the New Testament by the writers that they were inspired to write Gospels or Epistles?

4. In what did the inspiration of the apostles consist, and how is it described?

5. Is *Inspiration* the same as *Infallibility?* Can a man be *inspired*, and not be *infallible?*

6. What is the difference between the inspiration of the New Testament writers and that of Plato or Shakspere?

7. What are the proofs commonly given in behalf of the doctrine of Plenary or Verbal Inspiration? What is their value? What are the objections to this view?

N.B.—Answers to June questions will be given in the August number. Answers to July questions in the September number.

We invite any one, who feels any inclination, to become a member of the Bible Class.

Names may be sent directly to Miss L. Freeman Clarke, Magnolia, Mass., during the months of July, August, and September. (After September 30 Miss Clarke's address will be changed.)

Questions during the summer will be of a general character, preliminary to the study of the text of the New Testament.

Questions will be printed each month in *The Cheerful Letter*. Students will write out answers, so far as they are able, and send them directly to Miss Clarke by the first of the next month. (It is better to send them by the first of the month, but a few days later might not be too late.)

Answers will be received and suggestions made in the number of the paper following the date at which the answers are sent in. We should like to print in the paper the best answers given by students.

We have been asked to suggest books that are helpful in the study of the New Testament. We do this with the proviso that no one must consider it as *necessary* to own any of those books which we mention. Our class is primarily for those who are not able to obtain books, and who do not live near public libraries. But, for the benefit of those who are able to buy or borrow them, we will occasionally suggest a few names. Often these may be borrowed through our book and magazine club.

Life in Palestine when Jesus lived, by J. Estlin Carpenter.—A small book, full of valuable information; a great help in studying the Gospels. The price is 50 cts. It may be ordered from 25 Beacon Street, Boston. If a student wishes to buy *one* book, and only one, and is limited in means, it would not be a mistake to choose this book.

Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, by Edersheim.—The unabridged edition is large and expensive, in two large volumes; the abridged, in one volume, much less. Full of interesting matter. The author was formerly a Jewish Rabbi, and many passages in the New Testament are made clearer by information regarding manners and customs of the Jews. It may be ordered through any good book-dealer. (We are sorry not to have the price of the abridged edition at hand.)

Sketches of Jewish Social Life. Edersheim.

The Temple, its Ministry and Services. Edersheim.—All the works of Edersheim have a unique value.

Jesus and his Biographers. By W. H. Furness.—This book is unfortunately out of print, but can often be borrowed, sometimes bought second hand. It ought never to be out of print, for its place can never be taken. Next to this, by the same author,

The History of Jesus.—Contains some of the same matter, but not quite so full.

The Life of Christ, by Farrar.

The Life of Christ, by Geikie.

Too well known to need any comment.

Life and Times of Jesus. As narrated by Thomas Didymus. By James Freeman Clarke. Cloth, $1.75. Paper, 50 cts. Lee & Shepard, Boston.

First Lessons on the Bible. E. H. Hall. 50 cts. 25 Beacon Street, Boston.

Commentaries, by Alford, Livermore, Schmidt and Holtzendorff, and *The Speaker's Commentary.*—All are helpful and —when attainable—may be consulted to advantage.

Last, Smith's *Bible Dictionary* is a treasury of important information of all kinds, containing the most valuable results of the study of the best English and American scholars.

The questions in our June number would probably be most fully answered by consulting Smith's *Bible Dictionary*.

Cruden's Concordance.—Any concordance has great value in studying the New Testament. For, by comparing passages in which the same word or phrase occurs, we learn to understand their meaning. It is well worth while to keep a "commonplace" book, and write out passages from the Bible which illustrate each other.

FROM A LETTER.

"I am trying to study the Bible, but I find it very up-hill work; and, seeing something about *The Cheerful Letter* and Bible Class, I thought it would help me very much, and write to you for information. Can one join the two classes (Bible and History), and is the little paper in connection with the class? or can one join the class without taking the paper?

"I shall join the class, anyway; but I have a friend that is obliged to count every penny, and, although fifty cents is a small sum, yet every one helps make a dollar."

Answer.—Quite a number of our correspondents take *The Cheerful Letter* on purpose to send it to some one who would like to receive it. If any one desires to receive a copy, and feels that she cannot afford the price, will she write to our secretary, Miss Bertha Langmaid, care Miss C. E. Brown, Manchester, Mass?

The Bible Class is rather in connection with the paper than the paper with the class. It would not be practicable to join the class without having the paper, because the questions, explanations, etc., will be printed in the paper. By this method all members have the same advantages. If one student asks a question or suggests a difficulty, all will read the answer.

Shall we print the names of *new* members in each issue of our paper, as is the custom of the Shut-in Society?

Will members give us their views on this point?

THE HISTORY CLASS.

We hope to give a list of questions on the early history of America in our August or September number. Meantime, we will suggest a few books, the reading of which will be good preparation.

The Life of Columbus.
By E. E. Hale, 1 vol.
The Life of Columbus.
By C. K. Adams, 1 vol.
The Life of Columbus.
By Helps, 1 vol.
The Life of Columbus.
By Aaron Goodrich.
The Life of Columbus.
By Washington Irving.

See also "Prophetic Voices concerning America" (*Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 20), by Charles Sumner; "Leif Ericson," by Justin Winsor; "Voyages of Northmen to America," E. F. Slafter; "Discovery and Spanish Occupation of America," John Fiske; "Voyages of Elizabethan Seamen," E. J. Payne; "Adventures and Discoveries of Captain John Smith," John Ashton; "Fernando De Soto," R. M. Lindsay; "Life of Sir Walter Raleigh," Edwards.

In the series of biographies by Jacob Abbott and John S. C. Abbott, read the Life of Queen Elizabeth, the Life of Fernando Cortez.

The histories of Prescott, Bancroft, Bryant, and H. H. Bancroft are often attainable or accessible. For any one who desires to buy one book we will suggest "The Discovery and Spanish Occupation of America," by John Fiske.

Names of those who desire to join this class may for the present be sent to Miss Bertha Langmaid, secretary of the Cheerful Letter Exchange, care of Miss C. E. Brown, Manchester, Mass.

May we add one more suggestion? Read, first of all, the chapters on reading, in Mr. Hale's invaluable little book, "How To Do It."

THE STUDY OF HISTORY.

We live in a fortunate period. Our gains over the last generation are many. How many pleasant and useful things we have learned! For instance:—

That a fever patient, parched with thirst,

may drink water, and that fresh air is likely to help him rather than hurt him.

That a sleepy person should be allowed to sleep, and not routed out of bed at five o'clock in the morning.

That cold water baths are hygienic in proportion as they are agreeable.

That long walks are desirable up to the point when they begin to be fatiguing.

That children need not be forced to eat what they dislike in order to discipline them.

That to struggle an hour with an obstinate child in order to oblige him to pick up a piece of paper is likely to cultivate his organs of combativeness and destructiveness.

That fault-finding is sometimes hurtful and generally useless.

That recreation is necessary for the health.

Among all the delightful discoveries of the nineteenth century, not the least is this: that history need not be tedious; that well-written history is more interesting than any romance; that there is no merit and no use in toiling through histories where we forget each page as soon as we have read it; and, indeed, by such a process we injure ourselves, for we form a bad habit of forgetting.

Who are our real teachers of history? What historical characters stand out bright and clear in our minds? Do we ever have to stop and think who was Louis XI. of France when we hear him mentioned? or who was Charles the Bold? Other Louises (what is the plural of Louis?) and other Charleses may be dim shadows: these two men we never forget.

"Ah!" says one of Miss Yonge's conscientious little heroines, "I suspect we would all rather be examined in our 'Quentin Durward' than in our —— ——." (And here I try to recall the name of the *proper* history she mentions in vain. I have not the book to refer to, and my memory has dropped the title; but I need make no effort to recall "Quentin Durward.") Now, is not Walter Scott our *real* teacher of history,—our real teacher because he *teaches* us? *His* lessons we learn thoroughly: it does us no harm that we learn them with joy and delight. True, he does not undertake a compendium of universal history; but what he does undertake he accomplishes.

Shakspere's Richard III., Henry V., King John,— we know them as if they lived in our own day,— better, indeed. And here we see the legitimate use of the imagination. The imagination is sometimes abused, as if it were necessarily a deceitful will-o'-the-wisp, leading us astray. But the fact is we need imagination for many practical purposes. In the study of history it is needed to give us a right comprehension of characters, manners, scenes, times, and customs. The historian who would give us a *correct* idea of a century differing in many respects from our own must have imagination to help him; and we must have enough imagination to follow his lead. This is why the great geniuses of romance and poetry are the best teachers of history. They transport us to the time and place; they give us real men,— alive, breathing, living, loving, daring, suffering. The professional writer of history used formerly to give us characters about as much like reality as paper dolls or fashion plates. They compared with the characters of Scott and Shakspere as the wood-cuts in our daily papers compare with the portraits of Vandyke and Rubens.

However, it may reasonably be remarked, there is but one Scott and one Shakspere. Are we to read no other history but what these geniuses have written?

We use these names to illustrate an important truth. Here is the underlying principle. Good history is interesting. Uninteresting history is not useful, no matter how laborious, comprehensive, elaborate, and elegant in style. And historians have discovered this. Miss Cobbe advises us to put into our thanksgiving services the things for which we are really thankful, and adds that some recognition ought to be made for all the blessings that we enjoy which were unknown to our ancestors. This generation ought to give thanks that it was born after the time of Macaulay and Motley. I have heard a man who was young in the early part of this century describe the eagerness with which he watched for the articles by Macaulay, then published in an English periodical and recognized by their style; for they were anonymous. He was accustomed to walk several miles to meet the magazine on the first day on which it could possibly arrive in Boston. If it were not there, he had to walk those miles again the next day.

Winter or summer, wet or dry, made no difference. Think of that, young people, who can get into an electric car and reach any place within five miles of the centre of Boston! But the point of my story is the effect that was produced when people began to have *good* history to read. I do not know that it was a new heaven, but it certainly must have been a new earth.

But, if that beneficent change was brought about so long ago, why need we dwell on it now? May we not assume that the reform has been accomplished?

Not entirely. Reforms come slowly, educational reforms more slowly than many others. People of genius take the lead: a few intelligent, independent thinkers follow. Some timid, conscientious minds find it hard to free themselves from the old traditions. Great names carry weight, and awe us into submission. The "elegant allusions" of classic historians may slip off our minds like water off a duck's back, but there seems a sort of virtue in travelling through those dreary pages. I remember reading a history of this sort when I was about seventeen years old; and half the time I did not know of whom the historian was speaking, but had to search backward to find out,—not always with success. "I wish he would call this king by name!" was my doleful sigh. "How do I know whom he means by these little hints and suggestions?" Some one told me that was considered an elegant style; but how can obscurity be desirable in history?

An intelligent woman, a teacher herself, once said to me, "If you learn the history of America, you must, of course, learn the history of England; for the two are necessary to each other. Then, how can you learn the history of England without the history of France?" Going on in this way, it appears as if nothing short of universal history were worth anything; for the histories of all nations are intertwined with each other. To meet this necessity, the zealous instructors of youth inflicted on their unfortunate pupils compendiums of history, beginning with the creation of the world and ending with the reign of Queen Victoria. I remember such a history, in a large, fat volume, like a "Webster's Unabridged." A class of young girls, aged about fourteen, occupied a large part of two winters in studying it; and it is doubtful whether they remembered any part of it. A bare chronicle of dry facts, no mind could possibly retain them.

Here I part company from my friend, the school-teacher. It is, we may admit, impossible thoroughly to understand the history of England without having studied the history of France; but, suppose yourself ignorant of the history of both nations, what is the best way to begin to learn it? Is it not by beginning neither at the creation of the world nor the discovery of the nation, but by anything that is interesting enough to fix the attention? Let other facts collect around it naturally. Take some distinguished person; read a well-written life of him or her. If it is Queen Elizabeth, perhaps we shall want to know more about Bacon; then Shakspere, Spenser, Locke, Newton, Sidney, Drake, Raleigh, etc. Then we presently ask, "What was going on in other countries at the same time?" In France? In Holland? In Spain? In Italy? In America? A long history, with everything in it, each fact in its place, like pins stuck in a piece of paper, would be tedious, besides being impossible to remember, and would hang on an indefinite time. For a busy person, and for those who do not know much already, to read entertaining biography is a good way to study history. Here, too, come in well biographical reviews and essays, Macaulay's Bacon and Milton at the head; but there is a treasury of these to be discovered by consulting Poole's Index (as Dr. Hale advises in "How to Do It"), and, indeed, by keeping our eyes open to all the good articles in magazines to which we have access. Littell's "Living Age" is full of such.

Ought there not to be some system? Yes; but this is the way to *begin*. There is system enough for a beginner in taking a general subject in which he *can* become interested. Our subject, we will suggest, shall be the history of America, beginning with the early period. Begin, now, with *anything* we can *enjoy* relating to that early period,—any good life of Columbus (by preference a short one: read the long one later, unless it attracts you so strongly you cannot help reading it now), any good life of Captain John Smith, of Walter Raleigh, of Hernando Cortez. Then read *from* it, either forward or backward. What we *want* to know, that we

shall remember. There is no objection to a large book, if it is interesting enough: we read it like a novel in that case.

Do not let us distrust a writer because he is enthusiastic. To write well, a historian must be interested in his subject. Do not criticise him because he loves his hero. That is why he writes his story. Read the other side somewhere else. It is better to have both sides of a story than neither. If we are reading about Mary Queen of Scots, is it not better to read an author who warmly takes her part, and then another who defends Elizabeth, than one who cares for neither? "Probably there was blame on both sides," is almost as unsatisfactory a verdict as "Not guilty, but you must not do so any more."

Read sympathetically, then, but not blindly. Historians are not infallible: they are men, "of like passions" as ourselves. An error does not become a fact by being printed. Read between the lines; notice what confirmation the story has; from what sources it was drawn; how likely are those sources to be trustworthy; let your imagination help you; and such reading of history will be no waste of time.

L. F. C.

THE BOOK AND MAGAZINE CLUB.

OFFERS.

I will send monthly to any names sent me one copy each of the following: the *Ladies' Home Journal*, the *Household*, and the *Cosmopolitan*, also the *Christian Register*, weekly. Address (Mrs.) John F. Winch, Harvard Street, Brookline, Mass.

(Will any one who desires to receive these periodicals write directly to Mrs. Winch; and, if she receives more requests than she can respond to, will she send the names of those who apply to this department of *The Cheerful Letter*, where such requests will be printed?)

I should like to send monthly the *Ladies' Home Journal* to an invalid or to some one who lives at a distance from a library. Address (Miss) F. H. Curtis, 445 Centre Street, Jamaica Plain, Mass.

I have all the numbers of the *Wide Awake* for the years 1882 and 1885, the *Youth's Companion* from January to August, 1891, and a great many numbers of the little Unitarian paper, the *Every Other Sunday*, which I shall be glad to send to any shut-in invalid who would care to have any of them. Address (Miss) Mary E. Sawyer, Box 146, Framingham Centre, Mass.

I have several copies of illustrated magazines which I should be glad to send to invalids or to those who live out of reach of libraries. M. D. Clapp, Box 1170, Boston, Mass.

"THE CHEERFUL LETTER" EXCHANGE.

The young girls of the Chelsea Branch who are interested in *The Cheerful Letter* Exchange, while waiting for names of persons to whom to send literature and *Cheerful Letters*, thought they would cheer some one near home. Mrs. B. who attends the same church had her eighty-fourth birthday in June. Mrs. Salisbury and six young girls visited her on her birthday, carrying birthday cake, flowers, money, and other gifts; and all had a happy time.

(These young girls will not probably lack correspondents much longer. Will any invalid or any one who would like a cheerful letter address (Mrs.) S. W. Greenman, 147 Chester Avenue, Chelsea, Mass., who is the leader of this little band?)

LETTERS FROM SHUT-INS.

My dear Friend,—I received your card, also papers. Please accept many thanks for them. I have received several nice letters on my birthday; but I have no paper and envelopes to answer them. I should be so glad to have some. I have a supply of reading at present; will be thankful for more after I have read what I have. (Miss) Margaret Hamil, Floy, De Kalb Co., Alabama.

(We have ventured to insert this note, thinking that some one may perhaps like to write to Miss Hamil and enclose paper, etc. Also, some of us need to be reminded that in writing to a shut-in we should always enclose stamp, envelope, etc., unless sure that she has the materials for writing at command. A little package of stationery is often an acceptable gift to an invalid.)

——, Wisconsin.

My dear Friend,—I received *The Cheerful Letter*, and send many thanks. I need these words of joy that cheer and comfort the poor invalid and cripple. I would like to always keep it, but I must share with my shut-in sisters, and will pass it along to others, so soon as I have read it. May you never realize by experience the need of such!

Bridgetown, N.S., June 18.

Dear Miss ——, Your letter at hand, with postage, also the nice pamphlet, *Cheerful Letter*. Many thanks. I find the notice about the book you will give, "Stepping Heavenward." I have heard much about it, but never read it; would like to have it for my own, and like to read aloud to others, and lend any good book to others that cannot get them. I cannot do much of such work for want of postage. "Stepping heavenward" is just what I am doing each day, though I have not stepped my feet to the floor for nineteen years.

Morrison, Va., June 16.

Dear Friend,—We are enjoying the *Centuries* more than I can tell you, not only the serial story, but their entire contents. . . . I give them away in the neighborhood. I received a little paper, *The Cheerful Letter*, which I think will be the means of doing much good.

New Kamilchie, Washington.

"I still have the numbers of *Babyhood*, awaiting your disposal. I thank you with all my heart for the privilege of reading them. I have gleaned many little hints, copied whole articles and sent to Southern California, drawn patterns and descriptions therein for numerous far-away friends, telling where I gained the knowledge; and several are now actual subscribers. Not satisfied by using them so, I have dared to lend them twice. Being unable to copy the lengthy articles, and the borrowers equally unable to come to where the books were, I sent them, in one case, three miles, in another twelve miles away, each case being a young mother unable to nurse her child, and having previously lost one.

"About the other books, none ever reached me except those you sent direct. I would be so thankful, in the fullest sense of the word, for any of Miss Yonge's writings; for I am more of a shut-in than when I wrote last year. . . . My husband has been forced to find work away from home, leaving me to live on our homestead with my four little ones. I see no one but them for weeks, sometimes. Besides the unceasing care such a little group require, I am miserably broken in health."

(We have not ventured to give the names of the writers of these last letters, as we were not sure that they would wish it, the letters being to a personal friend; but we quote from the letters to show that the need of such correspondence, and the pleasure given by it, are real. Whenever any one, writing to a member of *The Cheerful Letter* Exchange, or thanking for a copy of *The Cheerful Letter*, will permit it, we should like to put the note, with the address of the writer, in *The Cheerful Letter;* for many of our members will be glad of the opportunity to write to an invalid or to send books and papers. Perhaps we are too scrupulous in retaining these names; but it is best to be on the safe side.)

We have subscribed for four copies of *The Cheerful Letter*, which we shall be glad to send to any one who desires them. Address (Miss) S. W. Wellington, Belmont, Mass.

Three young ladies between fourteen and sixteen years of age would each like to correspond with a shut-in invalid or with some one remote from libraries or churches. Address (Miss) S. W. Wellington, Belmont, Mass.

I should like very much to have one or more invalid correspondents. I should particularly like one who lives in Boston. Address Miss Mary E. Sawyer, Framingham Centre, Mass., Box 146.

Miss F. H. Curtis, 445 Centre Street, Jamaica Plain, Mass., and Miss Kate H. Garland, Concord, Mass., would like to correspond with an invalid or with some one who would enjoy receiving a cheerful letter.

Every one who receives a copy of this paper is invited by that fact to become a

member of *The Cheerful Letter* Exchange. Will any one who desires to join us write, giving full name and address, to Miss Bertha Langmaid, care Miss C. E. Brown, Manchester, Mass.?

We have an especially cordial welcome for invalids, lonely women living far from libraries and churches, and mothers of young children.

THE MOTHERS' COUNCIL.

In some of our domestic papers invalids have now a large share in the sympathies and thought of the other subscribers. This is very pleasant, and we are all glad to think how much comfort and relief has been brought into lonely and suffering lives by the drawing together of those who are far apart in space, but near in heart.

Some of us would like, without leaving out this blessed work, to do something else, too. We feel a great deal of sympathy for the many young mothers, with families of little children, scattered here and there in our great, wide country, living, some of them, in very lonely places, on ranches and prairies, struggling with the burden of loneliness, ill health, and incessant care and anxiety, and the heavy responsibilities which every mother knows, weighing more heavily because of youth and inexperience.

More than one such message has come to us from the Far West. In one case a young mother of twenty-two, with four little children, quite alone except for these little ones, her husband obliged to be away for months at a time, as no work could be obtained near home. In such a case the wife is obliged to live alone upon the claim, which would otherwise be forfeited, no neighbors within several miles, and often not seeing another woman for weeks together.

This is not a solitary instance: there are many such.

Can we not form a Mothers' Club or Council, and invite all these young mothers to join it? and those who abound in all that these lack will enjoy sharing some of their sunshine with the lonely.

Books and letters are much to those who see a living friend but seldom; and there are so many questions interesting to mothers. Those who have experience can help the younger by sharing with them what they have learned.

We should like to make this a friendly circle, where all would be welcome and all feel at home. Every baby should be the care of all. We will have a nursery corner in our paper, to which all these little ones shall be invited and be welcome. Here is a place where they will never be troublesome. So come to our meeting once a month, dear young mothers, our far-off sisters; for you need not leave baby at home: bring him with you.

Tell us about his sweet ways and his naughty ways. You will not tire us: we want to hear all about him. Perhaps we may be able to help each other. None of us knows everything, but all together we know more than each one of us alone.

I have noticed that it does not do to lay a heavy cotton spread over an infant's crib. Blankets are all that he should have besides the sheet. A cotton coverlet often makes a child feverish and restless. H. C.

MISCELLANEOUS.

SCRAP-BOOKS.

Some of us have offered old papers to shut-ins; but so many invalids are not able to use their hands much it seems a better way for some of our young people to make the scrap-books for them.

The *Christian Register* is a perfect treasury, if any one is lucky enough to have a file of old numbers. There are a great many anecdotes of animals, and other stories, for children. Then there is a great deal of good poetry. In nearly every number is a good sermon, which sometimes cannot be obtained elsewhere. Would not this be pleasant vacation work for some of the younger members of *The Cheerful Letter* Exchange? That is, to cut out the useful material from these papers and sort it into different parcels according to the subject, then make scrap-books thereof,— either miscellaneous, poetical, religious, or entertaining?

Will any one who has material that she desires to contribute to the paper send it for the present to Miss L. Freeman Clarke, Magnolia, Mass.?

(After September 30 Miss Clarke's address will be changed.)